

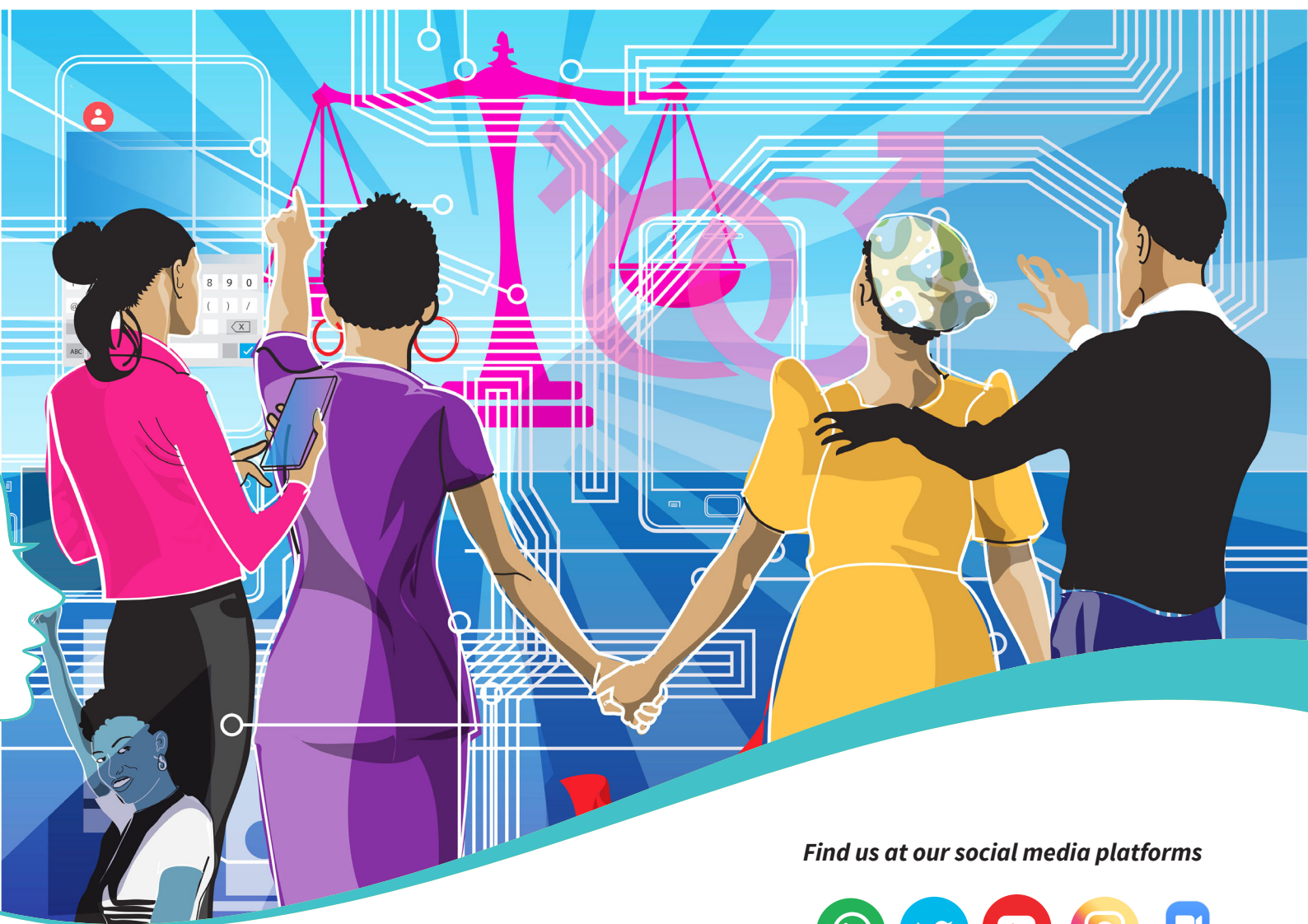


VOICE IN UGANDA NEWSLETTER

March 2023

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

"Digit ALL: Innovation and Technology for gender equality".



Find us at our social media platforms



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IS DIGITAL INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN UGANDA?

In Uganda, gender inequality has long been a prevalent issue affecting women's access to education, employment, healthcare, and political representation. Digital Innovation and technology has a potential to address gender inequality within the Ugandan society. The government of Uganda has developed policies and programmes to improve digital innovation and technology for instance ICT infrastructure development programmes, the 2018 Gender Education policy that ensures increased representation of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. The fast internet penetration has improved the use of internet for learning, trade particularly during the post COVID-19 era. Women now have access to social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube channels which, have enabled them to participate more actively in public discourse, express their opinions, and engage with others on social and political issues. Mobile money transactions have been a game-changer in promoting financial inclusion and empowering women in Uganda enabling women to access financial services conveniently, empowering them economically and giving them more control over their finances.

Despite these efforts and many more, women's aspiration to attain gender equality is constrained by limited use of digital innovation and technology.

In 2020, the Wide Web Foundation(WWF) reported that among four countries included in the survey of women's online experiences, Uganda had the largest gender digital divide. With an internet penetration standing at Uganda 26.2 per cent as of January 2021, WWF notes that 43 per cent of men are more likely to be online than Ugandan women. Some of the constraining factors include; limited digital skills, low access to digital tools and devices such as mobile phones, computers, low affordability of internet which has been reported to be one of the most expensive in the world and inability to access some of the social media platforms such as Facebook.

Voice in Uganda has through the several grantees endeavoured to improve digital skills and encouraged grantees and rightsholders to use the digital platforms to link and learn from each other, exchange information, share experiences and advocate for the rights of girls and women in an effort to leave no one behind.

This year, during the women's month, Voice brings you this Newsletter to share the various efforts on how digital innovation and technology has been harnessed in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, girls and other vulnerable persons in Uganda.



VOICE IN UGANDA LINKING AND LEARNING, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION IN PICTURES



Digital Specialist Dorothy Babirye together with other consultants during a documentary shoot: Voice Foot Prints



Linking and Learning Facilitators during the onsite Documentation Mentorship and Coaching Session using different Tech Gadgets

TOPIC

PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE EXPERIENCE AND BEST PRACTICES OF MEDIA ADVOCACY

Commemoration of the World Internet Day



KEY NOTE SPEAKER

James Nkuubi
Director of Programmes
at KITUO CHA KATIBA

MODERATOR



Anthony Agaba

Project Coordinator, COVID

PANELISTS



Asimire Ritah

Communications Manager, CCG



Grace Kenganzi

Communications Manager CEHURD



28th
October 2022

10-12 E.A.T
AM PM



Meeting ID: 836 1683 1671
Passcode: 789723
Time: 10am-12pm

5:07



VOICE INFLUENCING GRANTEE

Group · 38 participants



Group call

Search

Add group description

Created by Babs Dorothy, 15/02/2022

Media, links, and docs

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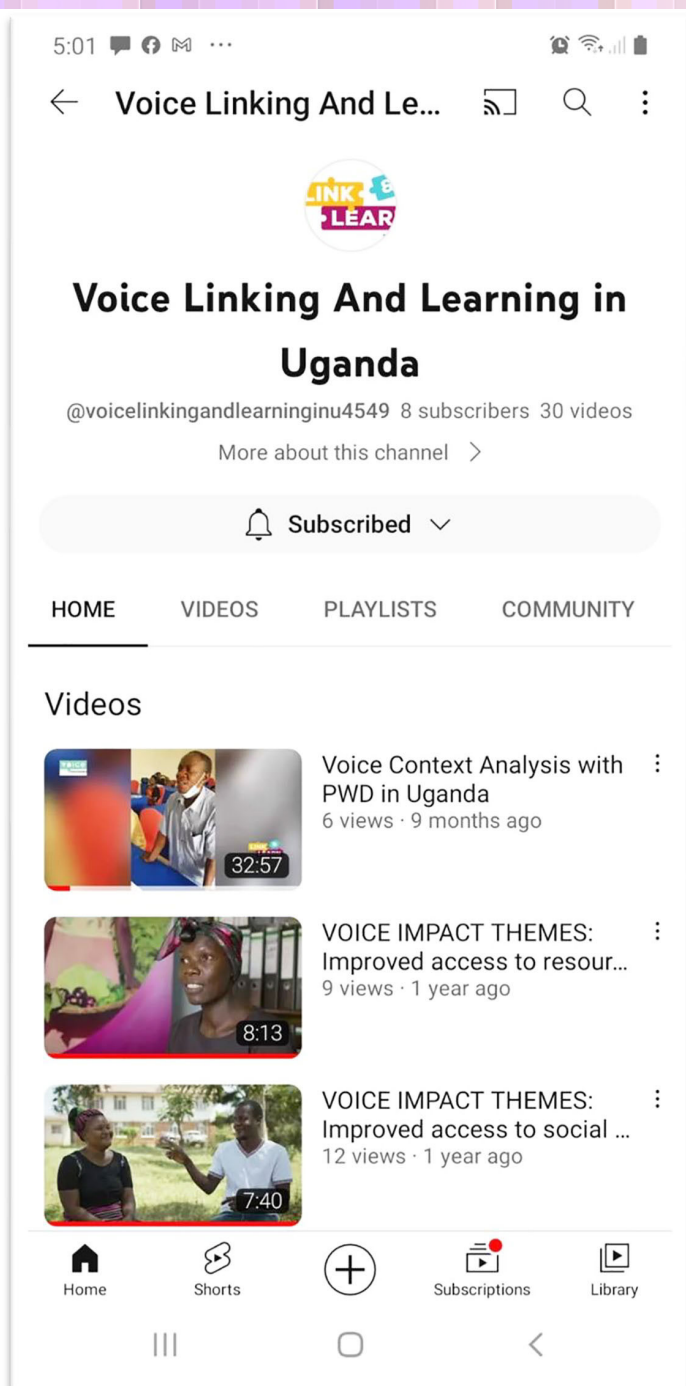


Poster for the Webinar to commemorate World Internet Day

Screenshot of the Voice in Uganda Influencing Grantee Whatsapp Page



Screenshot of an Orientation on Media Advocacy by Voice in Uganda Linking and Learning Facilitators



Screenshot of Voice in Uganda Linking and Learning YouTube Channel.

POEM: DIGITAL GENDER EQUALITY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

By Lauya Nasejje Program Learning Specialist/Linking and Learning Facilitator Uganda under Strategic Link Consult

Roses may be red, and violets blue, but they depend on ecosystems, just as in this digital age, we must empower all, not just a select few.

As a Voice millennial, I strive to use my voice, to make a difference and give others a choice. But as I navigate the digital space, I can't help but feel a little out of place.

I see the chaos, the tech issues that arise, and think "this is a boy thing," Not mine.

But then I remember a colleague, a woman like me, who excels in tech and delivers with glee. It makes me realize that gender doesn't define, our skills or our ability to shine.

We're all unique, with different strengths to share, and that's something beautiful, beyond compare.

So let's bridge the gender divide in this digital age, and embrace technology, turn a new page. Let's conquer fear and embrace the digital stage, for it has the power to connect and engage.

As we celebrate Women's Month (March) 2023, I'm reminded of the Voice women and so many others who've inspired me, who've overcome barriers and broken the mould, to pave the way for us to be bold.

Let's strive for inclusive and transformative tech, for a future that's sustainable, without a wreck. And let's do it together, hand in hand, to make this world a better place, a promised land.



THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN FIGHTING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN SHEEMA DISTRICT

By Kamusiime Catherine - MEAL Officer & Antony Agaba – Project Coordinator – COVOID

Community Volunteer Initiative for Development (COVOID) is a national indigenous child-focused Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) implementing a Voice funded Project titled “Empowering Survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) to fight GBV” in Sheema District. For more information; https://app3connect.com/ImageAssets/_profile-2023-03-21_08-15-51-AM.pdf

Social media use in Uganda is on the rise and is considered a reliable platform in allowing users to express themselves particularly in an environment of shrinking civic spaces. Using social platforms strategically ensures advocates can show their support publicly, and rights holders receive accurate information and referral for services and care.

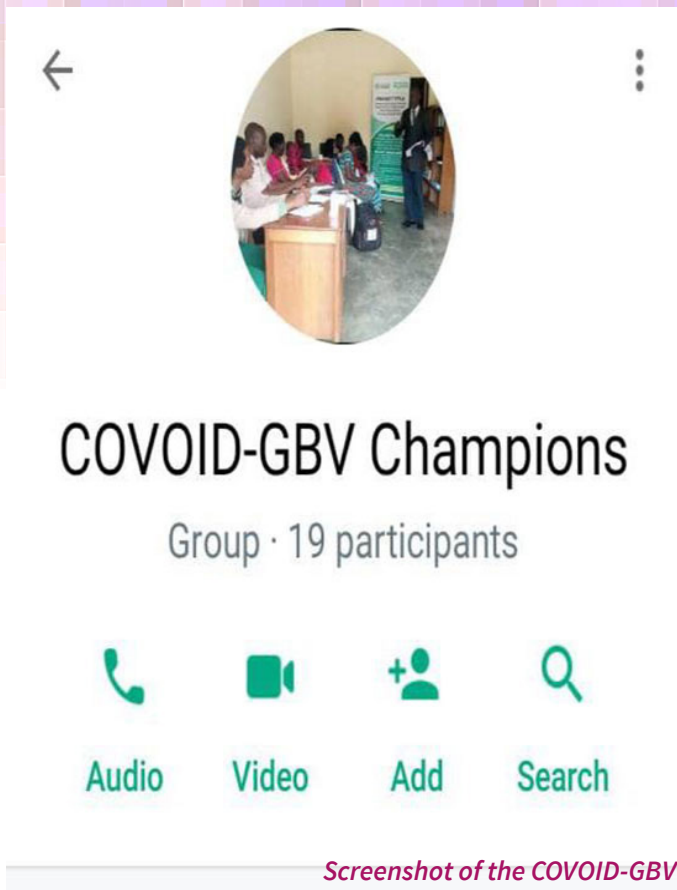
COVOID has therefore adopted using digital spaces in particular social media to amplify the work in addressing GBV among women and girls, and to engage both rightsholders and duty bearers through guided conversations in a campaign to end GBV in Sheema District.

“We have since been able to amplify our GBV work

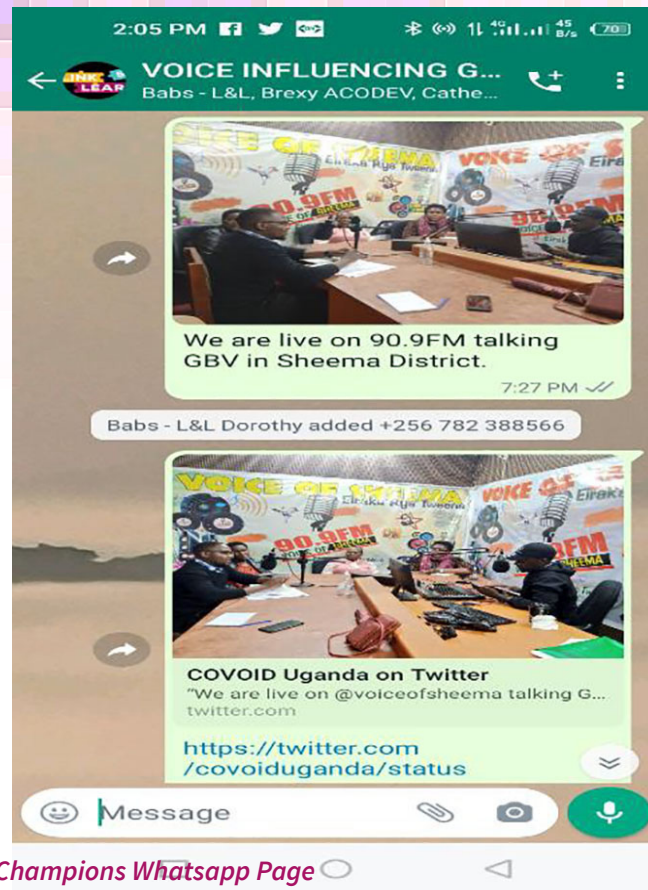
using digital platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp and have documented stories and blogs on GBV that have been amplified on the Voice global platform. We also have a WhatsApp group for the GBV Champions and COVOID project staff where we share information and experiences of what is happening in their respective communities regularly. The use of social media platforms has allowed COVOID to mobilize duty bearers and rights holders to join the campaign in the prevention of GBV. We have also been able to inspire other like-minded CSOs doing the similar work to build an online community. The online engagement with several duty bearers has allowed us to build public solidarity and this can be used to continue fighting GBV and other social injustices.” - Catherine, COVOID staff



Screenshots of twitter and WhatsApp messages to address GBV among girls and women



Screenshot of the COVOID-GBV Champions Whatsapp Page



The use of social media engagements has enhanced the work of GBV champions that were trained by COVOID to identify GBV survivors in the community and refer them for support.

Jennipher, one of the GBV champions shares her story below;



Jennipher(Right) while visiting and counselling a survivor

"When I was selected to be a Champion for gender-based violence prevention in my community, I really did not know what to do as I was also a victim of this violence, said Jenipher. I thought it was only about me". The project staff from COVOID explained to me that I have to use my own experience to change the situation of other women and girls who suffer from the same problem. Telling my story to others, I gained confidence

and started to speak out. This has been possible through our WhatsApp platform as GBV Champions. We have been able to share our stories with the rest of GBV Champions and GBV prevention network members, and we also share knowledge and learnings amongst ourselves. We mobilize communities, collect data, and prepare reports that we later submit to our supervisors from COVOID using the same platform. The WhatsApp platform gives us confidence and freedom to express ourselves without being limited and it facilitates quicker response. I believe with this ease of communication, if even other women facing abuse can be empowered to use the digital platforms to speak out and express their views, we shall see more change".

The use of social media platforms to advance women's equality and empowerment has been met with the high costs of internet in the country. Also, the continued restriction of some of the social media platforms by the state such as Facebook, which is the most user friendly has also affected the status of women both economically and socially. It is also important to curb inappropriate online conduct such as bullying which discourages those who fall victim to this vice. If correctly monitored and used, social media platforms can bring more positive changes to the society Ugandan society and improve the wellbeing of girls, women, and other voice rightsholders in Uganda.

IMPROVING SOCIAL SERVICE DELIVERY AMONG FISHERFOLK RIGHTSHOLDERS, THE ROLE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

By Florence Nakaayi Executive Director, JOYI Uganda

Joy Initiatives (JOYI) Uganda is a women-led Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) implementing a Voice funded project titled “Doors will open for Fisher-folk Self-Led Youth” in Mpigi District. For more information; https://app3connect.com/ImageAssets/_profile-2022-10-03_09-36-54-AM.pdf

Joy Initiatives Uganda (JOYI Uganda) has used digital platforms such as social media platforms to advocate for improved health, education and social service delivery in Kammengo Sub County and Buwama Town Council in Mpigi District. Through sharing field stories with the duty bearers, the issues raised by rightsholders such as the unmatched social services to the demands of rightsholders have been brought to the attention of the concerned authorities.

In March 2022, conducted a training among Fisherfolk Ambassadors on how to monitor, report and advocate for improved social service delivery. The Fisherfolk Ambassadors were also equipped with basic skills on the use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp to influence for improved social service delivery among Youth, Sex workers and Persons living With Disabilities within the fishing communities. In April

2022, JOYI created a WhatsApp group platform for Ambassadors and JOYI staff to enable them share stories, issues of concern among the rightsholders and achievements made towards improving social service delivery among the rightsholder groups. This platform is both a learning and inspiring avenue for both the ambassadors and staff in knowledge sharing and advocating for improved health and education service delivery in the district. On several occasions, JOYI Uganda has seen Ambassadors joining other district and community platforms advocating for improved social service delivery in their respective communities.

Several stories of change arising from use of social media to advocate for access to better social services have been compiled and summarised below;

A woman with hearing impairment residing in Buwama Town Council was ignored and not given attention when she visited Buwama Health Centre III because the health workers were not in position to communicate with her. This discriminative action from the health workers was captured and shared on WhatsApp and shared with the Town clerk who put it on the agenda of the Council Budget Conference in October 2022. A motion was raised and passed to improve service delivery for persons with hearing impairments by training health workers and other service providers in the Town Council in sign language interpretation.

Another case in point is Ms. Nabaterega Shakira, an epileptic 33-year-old female and ambassador for Persons Living with Disability in Kammengo Subcounty, used her phone to record the worrying situation of poor service delivery at Buyiga Health Center III where a young girl with epilepsy was denied psychiatric drugs. Shakira shared the footage on Whatsapp with the Mpigi District Health Officer and other duty bears. With amplification of

such field findings through social media platforms, Shakira and JOYI Uganda team reached the District Health Office and the In-charge of Butoolo Health Center III which already had a psychiatric nurse. The interaction aimed at establishing a regular psychiatric clinic. As a result, rightsholders living with mental disability and epilepsy in Kammengo have been accessing psychiatric services every last Tuesday of the month at the health centre since August 2022. Rightsholders are regularly mobilized by the Ambassadors to attend the clinic through phone calls and field visits for the lost to care.

Mr. Matovu John, a 27-year-old male Ambassador for People living with Disability in Buwama Town Council has also advocated on different social media platforms such as WhatsApp for inclusive education and construction of ramps and rails on public offices to ease accessibility by rightsholders living with physical disabilities. As a result of this advocacy initiative, ramps were constructed at the Out-of-Patient department wing at Buwama Health Center III by December 2022.



JOYIUganda @JOYIUganda · Nov 25, 2022

...

Today, rights holders living with mental disability and epilepsy in Buwe, Musa, Buzungu villages, Kammengo sub county have shared happy moments with @JOYIUganda. They narrate with smiles about how the monthly psychiatric clinic at Butoolo Health Center III has revived their lives



Voice

<https://twitter.com/JOYIUganda/status/1596105210606256131?s=20>

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES EMPOWERING WOMEN IN FORT PORTAL CITY

By Mwesigye Charles Project officer – ACODEV

Action for Community Development (ACODEV), is a Ugandan based Non-Governmental implementing a Voice funded project titled “Strengthening Youth in Democratization Processes”. For more details: https://app3connect.com/ImageAssets/_profile-2022-10-03_09-35-05-AM.pdf

As we celebrate International Women’s Day in 2023, ACODEV would like to share with you some exciting developments in Uganda through the voice project that are empowering women and giving them a voice in the democratic process.

Over the past few years, the use of digital technology has exploded, revolutionizing the way we communicate and connect with each other. Social media, mobile phones, and other digital tools have given women a powerful platform to amplify their voices and demand accountability from their leaders. In Fort portal City, digital technology is improving women’s access to information from the voices below;

“Women from Bukwali ward Kisumbi A village observe “we can now access information regarding their rights from our phones and are able to use it to hold our leaders accountable”
Mwesigye Charles, ACODEV



Ms Jennifer a Rights holder in Bukwali Stressing a Point during one of the Live Talk show on Voice of Toro FM

The Strengthening Youth Involvement in the Democratization Process (SYID) initiative led by ACODEV, with support from VOICE has been particularly impactful when it comes to women utilizing digital spaces. The project has empowered persons living with HIV/AIDS, commercial sex workers, women facing gender-based violence, and women living with

disabilities to share their stories and advocate for their rights using digital media.

Discussions on radio talk shows have been amplified on other digital platforms such as twitter and Facebook where leaders have been tagged to act on issues affecting youth in Fort portal city. Their voices have been heard, and their activism has spurred real change in their communities.

Hon: Tusiime Florence- the Deputy Speaker Fort portal tourism city had this to say, “The radio and T.V talk shows have provided me with a constructive environment to be able to track the physical and emotional thoughts of women for example in my constituency(Central East in central division) where I represent, I have been able to rise the voices of the voiceless to the concerned authorities for them to get justice and all this has been mostly picked from the radio talk shows, social media and led to the identification of some of these victims.

However, as exciting as these developments are, we must also acknowledge the challenges that women face in accessing digital technology. In many rural and peri-urban areas, the cost of technological devices and subscriptions is simply too high for low-income populations. And even for those who can afford it, sociocultural barriers often prevent women from fully participating in the digital sphere.

That’s why it’s so important that we continue to work to break down these barriers and empower women to fully participate in the democratic process. Whether it’s through education, training, or simply making digital technology more affordable and accessible, we must do everything we can to ensure that women have the tools they need to make their voices heard.

As we celebrate International Women’s Day in 2023, let us remember the incredible progress that has been made, and let us also recommit ourselves to the ongoing work of empowering women and building a more just and equitable world.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH VOICE IN UGANDA LINKING AND LEARNING DIGITAL PLATFORMS

By Dorothy Babirye, Digital Specialist /Linking and Learning facilitator, Uganda under Strategic Link Consult. For more information visit: <https://www.linkingandlearning.ug/#/login>

The world we live in is constantly evolving, and ICTs play a vital role in shaping the future of every sector. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to use technology innovatively to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and improve the lives of the marginalized and discriminated.

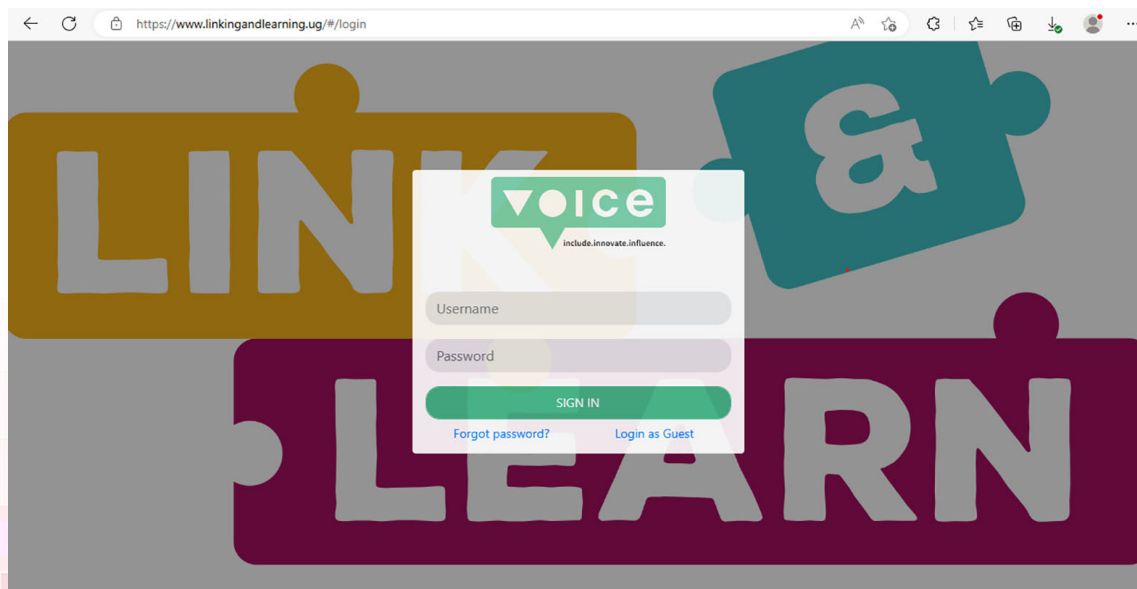
Voice in Uganda, through the “Linking and Learning” project, connects grantees using online platforms to create safe spaces for learning, unlearning, and experience sharing. The online platforms also allow for Voice rightsholders and grantees to repost their various documents, including stories of change, pictures, and videos, for easy retrieval. The emerging outcomes of Voice platforms are significant. Notably, is the positive shift in attitude towards the use of digital platforms among vulnerable groups. There has also been improved resource utilization, with monthly online meetings with all grantees allowing for more efficient interaction. The analytics obtained from the platform has facilitated informed decision-making, resulting in improved management decision-making. Finally, the platforms have created a safe space for grantee sharing and learning from each other, leading to improved connectedness among grantees.

However, when we talk about utilization of digital platforms and technology, the Voice linking and learning project is not without its challenges; Technophobia, myths associated with ICT, social and cultural barriers, such as the use of mobile phones

being limited to men in low-resourced communities, are some of the challenges faced by the project. Additionally, limited skills in ICT, government taxes on the internet, prohibitive costs of internet, airtime, and limited access to public technologies like the internet and high-speed bandwidth are other issues faced by the project. Moreover, poor attitudes towards ICT among rightholder groups and unfavourable government policies on censorship of ICT platforms also pose significant challenges.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for the use of digital platforms among Voice grantees and rightsholders to advance their empowerment and influencing agenda. The expansion of ICT infrastructure and increased internet penetration, digitalization of existing services by the government, and educational institutions, increased reception of ICT particularly by the young generation, and employment opportunities created by the ICT sector are some of the opportunities that can be leveraged.

In conclusion, the Voice linking and learning project is a step in the right direction towards providing digital spaces for Voice rightsholders to thrive. There is need to continue advocating for more affordability of internet and digital devices to improve inclusive development of the vulnerable girls and women in Uganda.



INDIVIDUAL VOICES ON #DIGITALL



DigitALL in linking and learning means learning through technology irrespective of gender such as websites, social media, online communities, webinars and podcasts. As a facilitator, we have embraced the use of technology and its enablers such as internet and online applications like zoom which have helped us to do a lot of work around mentorship and coaching in grantee areas of need through peer to peer sharing and facilitator led sharing.

*Lauya Nasejje Program Learning Specialist/
Linking and Learning Facilitator Uganda
under Strategic Link Consult*



I strongly believe that unless you try something, you can't be sure that it works. The pandemic showed we are willing to adjust and learn. The embrace of the different digital spaces has allowed both the grantees and facilitators to execute different activities that would otherwise not have been possible, and we continue to embrace the different innovative ways in which we can share experiences with each other.

*Joanna Namirimu Inclusive Engagement
Specialist /Linking and Learning Facilitator
Uganda under Strategic Link Consult*



Over the years, The Linking and Learning (L&L) Facilitators in Uganda have employed virtual technologies such as electronic tools, systems, devices and resources in generating, storing or processing information and data. For example, the L&L Facilitators have used social media applications like WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook and YouTube, the Voice Online Platform (website), and multimedia interactions supported by hardware tech such as mobile phones and computers among others to engage grantees, rightsholders and other Voice stakeholders.

Our experience has revealed that digital innovation and technology has demystified the traditional in-person and physical ways of working by enabling the L&L Facilitators to work from anywhere, on any device, at any time to effectively engage with various Voice stakeholders irrespective of their gender, socio-economic and political backgrounds.

Richard M. Kaye - Team Leader/ L&L Facilitator, Uganda under Strategic Link Consult



DigitALL in linking and learning has been an exciting journey especially with the outbreak of COVID-19. Many grantees with their right holders especially women and girls (youth) adopted the use of technology to amplify their voices on issues that were affecting them but also to learn from various stakeholders including L&L facilitators. However, what remains a challenge are the high internet costs.

Hakim Mawanda Lawyer/ Project Coordinator/ Linking and Learning Facilitator Uganda under LASPNET



Digitalization has leveled the playing field for woman leaders and enabled them to succeed in their leadership journey by gaining access to information and resources that were previously difficult to obtain. Community voices have been amplified through digital tools such as social media which has helped women leaders to advocate and connect with other leaders, share information, ideas and build supportive networks.

Sandra Anena Voice Project Officer GWED-G

Gulu Women Economic Development & Globalization (GWED-G) is a women's rights organisation implementing a Voice funded project Titled "Strengthening Participation and Accountability through Community Engagement." In Gulu District. For more detail: https://app3connect.com/ImageAssets/_profile-2022-10-18_02-30-06-PM.pdf



At Teens Up Now project, we are utilising Digital platforms such as a WhatsApp, twitter(@SORAKUganda), Instagram, YouTube to link up with our stakeholders such as police and other community leaders to solicit their active participate and support in addressing the needs and rights of youth. Our rightsholders are adopting to the use of these channels and we are building their skills in an effort to leave no one behind.

Aisha Namirembe Program Manager Sorak Development Agency

SORAK Development Agency (SORAK) is a registered grassroot-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) implementing a voice funded project Titled; "Teens Up Now" in Mubende District. For more details: <https://www.linkingandlearning.ug/#/profiles>

For more Information please visit; www.voice.global

